



The Patron of the 2017 Ljubljana Festival is the Mayor of the City of Ljubljana, Mr Zoran Janković.

PRESS RELEASE

Ljubljana, September 2017

Silver Order of Merit for Maestro Valery Gergiev

Slovenian President Borut Pahor has conferred the Silver Order of Merit on Maestro Valery Gergiev. A world-renowned conductor, Maestro Gergiev receives this honour in recognition of his enrichment of Slovenia's cultural life with supreme musical achievements.

The Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra of St Petersburg made its first appearance in Slovenia back in 1997 with a concert performance of Tchaikovsky's opera Eugene Onegin conducted by Valery Gergiev. This has been followed by almost annual appearances of the Ljubljana Festival. Particularly noteworthy is the Ljubljana performance of Mahler's Eighth Symphony, the largest performance anywhere in the world to date in terms of the number of performers. We are honoured by the Maestro's almost annual visits and the fact that, despite his busy schedule, he is able to find the time to raise the level of one of the oldest and most important festivals in Slovenia and the wider region.

Valery Gergiev is one of the most important conductors working today. *Time* magazine named him one of the hundred most influential people in the world. Of Ossetian descent, Gergiev was born in Moscow in 1953 and grew up in the Caucasus, where he began his musical education and was recognised as a remarkably gifted child. He continued his education at the conservatory of music in what was then Leningrad and in 1976, while still a student, won the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Competition in Berlin. Following this competition he was offered a post as assistant conductor at the Kirov Theatre (today the Mariinsky Theatre), where he made his conducting debut in 1978 with a performance of Prokofiev's opera *War and Peace*. He was chief conductor of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra from 1981 to 1985. His meteoric rise continued and in 1988, at the age of just 35, he was appointed artistic director of the Kirov Theatre, becoming overall director of the company – by now renamed the Mariinsky Theatre – in 1996. Under Gergiev's leadership the Mariinsky began the tradition of marking the anniversaries of various composers. He also began to revive Wagner's operas. He conducted the first complete cycle of *The Ring of the Nibelung* to be staged in Russia in almost a century – the first time the works were performed in the original German. His successes are not limited by national borders and he is extremely active elsewhere around the world. He quickly forged ties with the managements of almost all the world's most prestigious opera houses,

most notably with the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he and the Mariinsky are still regular guests, as distinguished representatives of Russian culture. He has appeared in many of the world's most famous opera theatres, including the Bavarian State Opera, the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, and the Metropolitan Opera, and has worked with the finest orchestras, among them the Berlin, Paris, New York and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He also became the first Russian conductor after Tchaikovsky to conduct the opening concert of the new season at Carnegie Hall. From 1995 to 2008 he was principal conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. He led the London Symphony orchestra from 2007 to 2015, and in 2015 became chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic. We are always happy to welcome him back to Slovenia, and our expectations are always justifiably high. Maestro Gergiev first performed in Slovenia with the Mariinsky Theatre in 1997 as part of European Culture Month. He has been a regular guest of the Ljubljana Festival since 2003. Under his leadership, the Mariinsky Theatre has become one of the most important music theatres in the world, and in 2008 its orchestra was ranked among the world's top twenty ensembles.

The Mariinsky under Valery Gergiev gave the first complete performance in Slovenia of Wagner's legendary Ring Cycle. The first two parts of the tetralogy (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*) were premiered at the Ljubljana Festival in September 2011. This year the company returned with the last two parts (*Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*), and thus the story of Wagner's great tetralogy was told in its entirety for the first time in Slovenia, an important milestone for musical culture in this country. Maestro Gergiev's almost annual visits are unquestionably a great honour and we are grateful that, despite his busy schedule, he is able to find the time to ennoble and enhance the Ljubljana Festival.

Thank you for taking the time to discover the Ljubljana Festival programme.

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The founder of the Ljubljana Festival is the City of Ljubljana, which also provides financial support.



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The founder of the Ljubljana Festival is the City of Ljubljana. The Festival has been a member of the European Festivals Association (EFA) since 1977.